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Heritage as an Alternative Driver for Sustainable Development and Economic Recovery in South East Europe

The Implication of International Cooperation in the Sustainable Valorisation of Rural Touristic Heritage

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Abstract

Sustainable development, perceived as a main trend in the entrepreneurial field, has become a concept with extended applicability in the daily activities of economic entities. Although, initially, the concept has been only theoretically tackled, nowadays the necessity of putting it into practice is fully recognized and understood. The values of the Romanian rural environment, very little known and recognized at international level, are fundamental cornerstones for the exploitation of socio-economic development opportunities which are very much needed by the Romanian rural environment. The present paper aims to undertake a study that will analyze the advantages of international cooperation in the maintenance and valorisation of rural touristic heritage. The study starts from the premise that the rural touristic heritage sustains the socio-economic and cultural development at regional and national level. In compliance with the requirements of sustainable development, we believe that it is a duty to pass on the touristic heritage to the future generations in an improved state which is beneficial for the socio-economic progress. The study is concluded on the following stages: the presentation of rural touristic values from the North-East Development Region, the highlight of actions supported so far for the reconstruction of rural environment, the identification of the most efficient ways of international cooperation for the valorisation of touristic identity of the rural environment as well as a set of proposals of the regional rural tourism through valorisation mechanisms of the available touristic heritage.

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1. Introduction

Sustainable development represents a priority in the strategic trends of the present economic world since the need for a balance between economic development and the conservation of factors which sustain economic development is much stronger felt. In the context of the need to ensure a sustainable development, to follow up simultaneously economic, social, ethical and ecologic objectives is not something new for the entities involved in socio-economic activities.

One of the fundamental elements which contribute to support the sustainable economic growth is represented by the heritage of the rural environment. Thus, the analysis of the rural heritage has been a priority in the national research and it is a current basic preoccupation as a theory in the practical studies. Starting from the premise that the rural world is characterised by simplicity, perennity and force of truth (Rusu, 2012), we believe that in order to identify the valorisation

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trends, the highlight and analysis of the elements composing the Romanian rural heritage represent a much needed approach for shaping a viable model of sustainable development.

The Romanian rural space, known as the support of the socio-economic evolution at national level, has remained, prevalently after the 90s, one of the minor urgent priorities at strategic and decisional level, from multiple reasons, among which we can mention: globalisation effects, modernisation and emancipation of rural population, lack of necessary funding for the support of rural heritage values, ignorance regarding the importance of existing heritage values, economic downturn, wrong perceptions about the value of the rural space etc. In the last 25 years, the Romanian rural environment has gone through numerous fluctuations which compromised its development rhythm and have affected the appreciation of inherited values and those available in the present.

The present study aims to highlight the heritage touristic values of the Romanian rural environment, in the context of the need for recognition and valorisation of the touristic heritage at international level. Satisfying these needs could be performed inclusively through an efficient international cooperation, namely by putting into practice the strategies specific to sustainable development, at national and regional level.

The Romanian village is a fundamental pillar of the cultural heritage through the conservation of traditions and customs, of trades, of churches, archeological sites and historical remains, having a rich traditional culture, a diverse architecture and a lifestyle based on authentic material and spiritual values. One of the economic sectors with a high level of functionality is tourism, presently being recognised as a dynamic and active sector within the rural environment. (Ciupagea, 2006) There is a vital connection between rural tourism and the heritage held by the rural space.

The tourism performed within the Romanian rural background is on a superior position, being surpassed only by agriculture. Given that the statement that says that the Romanian rural space holds multiple and valuable touristic heritage elements, still insufficiently capitalized on, is highly used, the current paper aims to identify the best practices of valorization of the heritage elements of the rural space, under the circumstances of the need to ensure a sustainable economic development.

In the Romanian economy belonging to the rural space, the most important touristic fields which can be listed as touristic industry are: agritourism, mountain tourism, spa tourism, circuit tourism, touristic events, gastronomic tourism etc. Under this circumstance, we may ascertain that rural tourism represents a real opportunity for the development of sustainable economy both at regional and national level. Even if the Romanian rural economy is prevalently agricultural, the culture and local tradition, alongside natural and anthropic heritage elements, exist mostly in rural areas. Of the multiple solutions applicable to ignite the touristic activity in the Romanian rural space, through the sustainable valorization of the heritage elements, we believe that an essential role is played by international cooperation, seen under various forms: mutual experience exchanges, use of functional models adjusted to domestic conditions, financial help, flexibility in the exchange of touristic products, identification of best practices of behavior in touristic services etc.

2. Literature review related to sustainability and rural heritage values

The literature focusing on the analysis and study of terms related to sustainability and rural heritage values is extremely rich and valuable, both at national and international level. The basics for the study of the terms we are using abundantly in this paper are both theoretical and practical.

The sustainability term, used sometimes abusively in various contexts without understanding very clearly its significance, is a fundamental pillar in ensuring the balanced socio-economic development of the rural space, on condition that at entrepreneurial, strategic and decisional level, the principles of a real sustainable development should be perceived and understood. Contrary to the numerous statements in the literature, according to which the definition of sustainable development belongs to the Bruntland Report (1987), we believe that at internal level, sustainability has been recognized since earliest times, with the specification that at that stage the concept was not scientifically defined and recognized.

Thus, from the statement: "Moldova is not mine, but it belongs to the descendants of your descendants." (Prince Stephen the Great, 1500) we may understand the need and requirement to preserve and conserve the heritage held by the Romanian rural space prevalently in Moldova around the year 1500. Nowadays, in compliance with the requirements of sustainable development, we think that it is a duty that the rural touristic heritage should be come down to future generations in an improved state, beneficial and necessary for the socio-economic progress.

At international level, the most known authors for the research of the sustainability term are: Meadows, D.H., D.L. Meadows, J. Randers, and W.W. Behrens - *The Limits to Growth* (1972), Daly, H. E. - *Towards a Steady State Economy* (1973), Stivers, R. - *The Sustainable Society: Ethics and Economic Growth* (1976), Barbier, E. - *The Concept of Sustainable Economic Development* (1987), Von Weizsacker, E.U. - *Doubling Wealth, Halving Resource* (1998), Brown, L. - *Plan B.2.0.* (2006), Dasgupta, P. - *The idea of sustainable development* (2007), Barbier, E. - *Natural Resources and Economic Development* (2007) and many others. In the Romanian literature, the most famous authors who dealt with the research of

sustainable development are: Dobrescu, E., Abu L.L. - Sustainable development in Romania. Models and scenarios on medium and long terms (2005), Rojanschi, V., Bran, F., Grigore, F., Ioan, I. - The measurement of sustainable development (2006), Zaman, Gh., Gherasim, Z. - Criterios and principles of sustainable development from point of view of its resources (2007) etc. Moreover, there are numerous institutions and organisations that allocated a fairly wide space to the study and analysis of sustainability: World Bank, Sustainable Development: Center for Global Studies, World Commission for Environment and Development, Department for Sustainable Development of UNO, Center for Excellence in Sustainable Development, Eurostat, National Center for Sustainable Development (created in 1997 under the auspices of the Romanian Academy), the Institute for Management and Sustainable Development etc.

The rural values and the analysis of rural heritage have been tackled in various niche studies and in national and international scientific research. Among the Romanian authors in the literature which are oriented towards the study of rural values we can mention: Gavrilesu, D. - Agroalimentary economics (1996), Otiman, P.I. - Rural economics (1999), Bohateret, V.M. - The economic problems of rural area from Moldavia (1999), Vincze, M. - Regional and rural development. Ideas and practices (2000), Dona, I. - Rural development (2005), to name just a few. The international literature is extremely rich both in old and modern research: Cuvelier, P. et al. - Patrimoine, modes de tourisme et developpement local (1994), Leon, Y. - Rural development in Europe (2005), Carter, M. - Agriculture finance (2005), Malcolm, J. - Rural development. Principles and practices (2005), Gallerani, V. et al - Theory and practice of rural development (2005), Lindberg, J. - Heritage-Based Rural Development: Principles, Strategies and Steps (2011) etc.

3. Methodology research

From a methodological point of view, the use of quantitative methods allowed us to perform an evolutive analysis of the identified phenomenon, to collect and interpret specific data and offer causal explanations. The short-term, contextual research enables the performance of the theoretical emergence. The external observation is completed by the analysis of documents, using figures, tables and comments. Thus, the fundamental research allows us to acquire progress perspectives, oriented towards practical future applications.

The approach follows the line *data – correlations - models*, based on the principles of observability and correspondence and phenomenological explanation. In a nutshell, we start from a hypothesis, we locate the phenomenon, we argue, make comparisons and correlations and we formulate proposals, recommendations and conclusions. This way, the research underpinning the present study is based on the correlated analysis between: the inventory of heritage elements in the rural area, the identification of weaknesses which affect the valorisation in a sustainable manner of heritage elements and the formulation of proposals and recommendations in order to counteract these weak points. Starting from the existing heritage elements which can contribute to the socio-economic development at regional and national level, creating added value and through an adequate valorisation supporting the trends of a sustainable development, we formulated two basic hypotheses:

- the rural touristic heritage supports the socio-economic and cultural development at regional and national level;
- international cooperation has an essential role in the valorisation of the rural touristic heritage through the functional models applied in countries with a tradition in rural tourism and through the best practices supported in this context.

The methodological approach in the present paper consisted of the following stages: collecting the specific information, formulating the hypotheses, their validation by means of the analysis and interpretation of collected data, performance of a SWOT analysis for the heritage elements in the rural area in the North-East Development Region, strategic conclusions and recommendations. The practical study was concluded at regional level, with application to the North-East Development Region and its goal was: to present the rural heritage values, to highlight the actions supported so far for the sustainable reconstruction of the rural space, to identify the most efficient ways of international cooperation for the valorisation of touristic identity of the rural space, as well as a set of proposals concerning the correlation of international cooperation activities with the need to develop the regional rural tourism through valorisation of the available touristic heritage.

4. Heritage values in the Romanian rural area: inventory from the perspective of touristic development

Romania's touristic heritage is extremely rich, diverse and evenly distributed among the 8 development regions. The Romanian rural area holds numerous touristic attractions and a tremendously rich and diversified touristic and cultural heritage. The rural heritage holds the ensemble of tangible and intangible elements which account for the nature and evolution of the relationships of a community with the territory where it lived and developed its social and economic activities. (Grigorovschi, and others 2007). The cultural heritage held by the rural area is its symbolic capital and ensures the cultural identity of the Romanian village, being an important source of sustainable development. (Agronatur Project, 2006).

The *tangible heritage* pertaining to the rural space comprises the natural heritage, the rural landscape and the private space where communities coexist, architecture elements and environmental factors.

The *intangible heritage* is comprised of the ensemble of intangible goods of a territory: lifestyle, customs and traditions, cultural events, commercial activities specific to one area, linguistic peculiarities, art and cultural events etc.

The authenticity elements of the Romanian rural space are translated into: spiritual values (traditions and customs, culture and own beliefs), moral values (lifestyle, cultural manifestations), material values (clothing, cuisine, architectural style of villages and houses). The inventory and analysis from the perspective of sustainable valorization of the heritage elements of the rural area focus on the North-East Development Region which holds the greatest rural area (94% of the total surface), being also the most populated region (around 3.7 million inhabitants in 2011, meaning 17.3% of the country's population). The rural population is prevalent: over 2 million inhabitants, which is 57% of the region's population.

From the heritage viewpoint, the North-East Development Region, a predominant part of the historical province of Moldova, holds an extremely attractive natural environment, completed by the history, culture and local traditions of remarkable originality and superior heritage value. (Agency for the North-East Development Region).

The economy of the North-East Development Region is predominantly agricultural, still tourism holds a special place in the economic activities, being met in the rural and mountain areas of the region. Since the rural area in the North-East Development Region covers a wide surface and holds significant natural, anthropic, historical, cultural, human heritage remains, we are entitled to evoke the touristic relevance of the rural area, the heritage contribution to the growth and progress of the rural tourism and the connection with the need for a sustainable development. The identification of ways to valorize the rural touristic heritage in the North-East Development Region and the set up of best practices for the valorization of touristic heritage elements in compliance with the models of international cooperation can be performed after a previous presentation of the inventory of heritage elements held by the region under analysis. (Table 1).

Table 1. Inventory of rural touristic heritage in the North-East Development Region

Natural heritage	Anthropic heritage	Cultural heritage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Varied, rich natural resources of the land and subsoil: mountains, forests, waters, protected areas, natural reservations; • Varied and evenly distributed relief (mountains, hills, plains); • Historical traditional area Bucovina, known for its high attractiveness level ; • Renowned vineyards and wineries (Cotnari, Huși); • Parks and natural reservations; • Biodiversity resources ; • Extended agricultural areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical monuments and fortresses, of national and international importance (Neamt Fortress, the Crown Fortress of Suceava); • Manors, inns, royal courts (of which some are enlisted in the touristic circuit: the Royal Inn in Suceava, the Polizu Manor, the Miclăușeni Manor); • Painted churches and monasteries in the north part of Moldavia, in the counties Neamț and Suceava (UNESCO recognized) as well as wooden churches; • Varied forms of ecologic, religious and scientific tourism; • Numerous, hospitable human capital, with high standard moral values ; • Diverse forms of rural tourism (namely in the counties of Suceava, Neamț, Bacău); • Valuable spa centers (Slănic Moldova, Vatra Dornei, Băilești) and salt mines (Cacica and Târgu Ocna). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rich ethnographic and folkloric heritage; • Unique intangible cultural heritage (traditions, social practices, rituals, crafts); • Numerous and diversified cultural events ; • Memorial houses, museums, exhibitions, art galleries; • Renowned cultural centers (Iași, Suceava, Neamț).

Source : personal processing from specialty literature and official databases

The heritage elements held by the rural area in the North-East Development Region do not include only those presented in Table 1, being much more numerous and diversified. In order to highlight the qualities manifested at touristic, economic and social level so that conclusions, recommendations and proposals could be drawn afterwards, we shall synthetise the strong points and the use of the identified heritage by means of a SWOT analysis.

5. The SWOT analysis of rural heritage elements in the analyzed region

Starting from the inventory-type presentation of patrimony elements found in the North-East Development Region we shall perform a SWOT analysis (Table 2) of the heritage presented, given that beside the favourable elements of the rural area under analysis, there are still non-valorised opportunities as well as many weak points and obstacles which stop or reduce the chances of heritage valorisation of that region.

Table 2. The SWOT analysis of rural heritage elements in the North-East Development Region

Strong points	Weak points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rich and diversified rural landscape; • Agricultural and silvicultural potential; • The most important wood provider in Romania; • Unique traditional and cultural components ; • Rich spiritual patrimony; • Well-preserved folklore, ethnography and gastronomy; • Active crafts industry and small industry (pottery, weaving, wood processing etc); • Food industry with ecologic and traditional specificity ; • Original architecture specific to the rural environment ; • Diversified touristic offer ; • Well-developed cultural, ethnographic and artistic tourism; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction and ageing of the rural population; • Poverty and low level of inhabitants' incomes; • External migration and high level of unemployment; • Fewer private entrepreneurs than in the urban areas • Precarious infrastructure; • Lack of financing and support for the rural entrepreneurship; • Organisational and management problems ; • Weak quality of the labour force; • Lack of apprentices in the crafts industry; • Modest and rudimentary dwelling conditions not accepted by tourists; • Minimal touristic knowledge; • Not knowing an internationally spoken foreign language; • Lack of certainty and security for tourists; • Lack of awareness of heritage values owned; • Low level of touristic occupancy in relation to the existing potential;
Opportunities	Risks and obstacles
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International promotion of the Romanian village values and traditions; • Valorisation of the Romanian village authenticity; • Increased interest of Romanian and international tourists in touristic attractions; • Practising the sports specific to the mountain areas (mountain climbing; horse riding, skiing, rafting etc) and of new forms of tourism; • Development of the hunting and fishing economy ; • Valorisation of ecological agricultural systems ; • Investments in agro-touristic farms ; • Investment opportunities and development of business environment ; • Modernization of airport and harbour network ; • Valorisation of historical, cultural and spiritual heritage ; • Well-paid touristic activities and services ; • Valorisation of silviculture, beekeeping and fishing products; • Development of international exchanges; • Valorisation of professional experience of persons who worked abroad; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of funding in infrastructure; • Decrease in interest in craft activities; • Degrading social phenomena ; • Migration of labour force abroad or in the urban areas ; • Deepening the discrepancies existing between the rich village and the poor village ; • Degradation of traditional technologies; • Non-selective assimilation of urban values; • Disadvantageous government policies; • High taxation ; • Irrational exploitation of environmental factors and irresponsible deforestation; • Inefficient methods, techniques and instruments of valorisation of rural heritage ; • Strong competition from other regions in the country or from abroad; • Defective image;

Source: personal processing

Taking into account all this, even if the rebirth chances of tourism through this economy sector are increased, rural tourism seems non-competitive in relation to other countries which have similar geographical conditions or sometimes, under the level of our country's conditions. (National Framework for Sustainable Development of Agricultural Sector and Rural Area during 2014-2020-2030). Considering the rural area as a priority of sustainable development is of major importance while the valorization of rural heritage for touristic goals represents a viable solution so that the principles of sustainable development should be met. (Otiman, 2011). The opportunities related to the existing patrimony in the rural area determined the formulation of proposals aiming to protect and conserve the rural territories for the benefit of an investment policy. (Cuvelier, P., and others, 1994).

Through the recognition of heritage values presented in Table 1, the North-East Development Region has increased

chances on an economic and social level by means of tourism which became of interest for the entrepreneurial environment from Romania and abroad. The difference between countries such as Romania – with a rich and various natural touristic heritage and other world's countries – which have similar conditions or inferior ones, resides in the awareness of the importance of valorizing touristic resources on an economic level. So far, the development of touristic sector within the rural area in the North-East Development Region has not been performed in a sustainable manner since there have not been correlations among the activities of diverse institutions involved, the level of infrastructure development, the lack of services and leisure units have not been taken into account, the focus has not been placed on existing heritage values etc. (National Framework for Sustainable Development of Agricultural Sector and Rural Area during 2014-2020-2030). The perspectives of a sustainable economic development in the rural area through the valorization of heritage elements are directly correlated and are based on non-agricultural activities developed in the rural space, which in their turn lie on the available resources at local level as well as on the professional traditions.

6. International cooperation – a means of support in the valorisation of rural touristic heritage

The attraction and involvement of the Romanian rural area in the internal and international tourism networks is a basic driver of a sustainable economic development. From the statistical data which reflect our country's position at international level as regards tourism development, one may notice that in 2011, Romania occupied the 63rd place in the world, of a total of 139 countries and the 34th place in Europe, of a total of 42 countries (World Economic Forum, 2013). The index of Romania's competitiveness in tourism and trips was of 4.15 in comparison with 5.99, Switzerland's index (placed the first).

In order to implement strategic actions to be supported including the sustainable valorisation of rural heritage elements, at international and national level studies, guidelines and frameworks have been performed so as to reconfirm the rural heritage values. Among these the most representative are:

- *National Strategic Framework for Sustainable Development of Rural Area 2014-2020-2030* which proposes as priorities the insurance of a sustainable ecologic balance of the rural space as well as the conservation and protection of natural resources and increase in the touristic capital;
- *Evaluation study of rural heritage and the integration possibilities in the European touristic system* established in 1995 by the Tourism Ministry and ANTREC, in order to ensure the visibility of rural heritage at international level;
- *European Chart of Territory Assembling* (Strasbourg, 1984);
- EUROTER Programme of CEE (1992) which highlights the importance and contribution of rural tourism to the sustainable rural development.

The most important entities dealing with the spread of socio-economic sustainability in the Romanian rural area have legal basis and different sizes, among which we can mention: the National Agency for Rural, Ecologic and Cultural Tourism (1994), Romanian Federacy of Mountain and Rural Development (1991), National Network of Rural Development (2011), Association Romanian Villages' Operation (1991), Romanian Agency for Agritourism (1993), National Authority for Tourism, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of National Education, Institute of Research and Development in Tourism, Institute of Geography, Institute of Agrary Economy.

In order to ensure the international cooperation that will provide better visibility and valorisation of rural patrimony in the analysed region, the Agency for North-East Regional Development has performed several specific actions (Agency for North-East Regional Development):

1. encouraging the development of regional and international partnerships and implementing projects in view of valorising the socio-economic potential for the development of the North-East Region;
2. participating in numerous and important projects and programs as promoter, partner or beneficiary;
3. set-up of the Bruxelles Representation Office having the role to act as an interface for the Agency for North-East Regional Development and North-East Region, so as to promote and increase their visibility in the European environment and to valorize the opportunities of international collaboration;
4. implementing projects in various fields of activity, among which the most significant for the valorisation of rural patrimony are : EST – European spiritual roads (2004-2006), ZEN – event network with zero impact on the cultural patrimony, RECULTIVATUR – elaboration of an instrument to include the cultural and religious values in the development and planning process of urban centers and neighbouring rural communities, Project of Regional Institutional Brotherhood in partnership with the regions Umbria, Marche and Campagna in Italy, DISCOVER NE Romania – Development of a Continuously Oriented Innovative Regional Strategy for the Valorisation of Economic Resources in Romania's North-East Region.

The implications of the Agency for North-East Regional Development in the international cooperation with countries which have acquired status in the recognition and valorisation of their heritage, in order to identify the best practices used in the sustainable valorisation of regional rural patrimony reside in (Agency for North-East Regional Development):

- selecting the regional partners and elaborating the documentation for financing thematic projects;
- putting at the disposal of external partners information and contacts needed for the stimulation of cooperation and valorisation of regional economic resources;
- organising visits of certain international economic missions in the region;
- creating the opportunities to discover the strategies adopted by various international organisations for the development of rural tourism and concluding cooperation agreements with adequate international associations;
- elaborating the Regional Plan for Action for North-East Tourism (PRAT), which aims at the sustainable touristic development, increase of competitiveness and touristic attractiveness of the North-East region, through the valorisation of natural and anthropic heritage and increase in the quality of touristic products and services;
- regular information regarding projects' submission aiming at the creation, development, modernization of tourism infrastructure for the valorisation of natural resources and increase in the quality of touristic services, within the Regional Operational Program;

The most representative international partners with which the institutions in the North-East Development Region collaborate with are from: Italy, Germany, Austria, Greece, and Great Britain. The suggestive examples of best practices specific to the sustainable valorisation of rural patrimony and rural touristic development, which proved their efficiency at international level, are:

- Germany: promotion of the offer *Peasant Holidays* through local associations reunited in autonomous regional associations, with their own marketing system, promoting the touristic offers, organising training internships and involving as members representatives of ministries and union trades while being supported also by the Ministry of Agriculture;
- Austria: benefits from a flexible agritouristic and touristic organisation system, without too many branches, being decentralised at local and regional level;
- France: presence of local, regional, departmental touristic associations which collaborate with local authorities as well as with agencies and tour operators activating in the area of rural tourism;
- Poland: TOURIN II Programme (1996) performed by the the State Administration for Tourism and Sport aimed to conduct the Development Strategy for Rural Tourism regarding: the development of rural tourism as an alternative to the "standard" tourism, the support of rural initiative and public-private partnerships, environment and local culture protection in the rural area, training of labour force, publishing textbooks of best practices, development of active forms of tourism, creating model centers for the rural tourism etc.
- Hungary: after the 80s, the rural tourism has become a priority and specific actions of valorizing the landscape, traditions, folklore, cuisine and rural hospitality have been supported. The concrete actions consisted in organizing associations and agencies to promote rural tourism for which local authorities offered a real support while the government granted fiscal facilities and economic easements. In 1994, the Hungarian Federation for Rural Tourism was founded having as main tasks: training the personnel in rural tourism, promotion of touristic offer, publishing catalogues and improving the information system, studying the market, supervising the quality of rural touristic services. Other organizations that had substantial contributions to the valorization of the rural touristic patrimony are: the Village Organisation for Accommodation Sale, the Organisation of Tourism Information, the Lucrative Association for the Development of Rural Tourism.

7. Conclusions

The conservation and valorisation of rural heritage is one of the main requirements enlisted in the communitary documents, starting from the premise that the sustainable valorisation of rural heritage elements directly contributes to the rural development, to the transmission of patrimony values to the next generations and to the insurance of visibility at international level. (Council of Europe, 2001). Thus, the Council of Europe elaborated and adopted in 2003 (Ljubljana) the Evaluation Guide of the European Rural Patrimony which later on was translated into Romanian and adapted to Romania's specificities on the occasion of the 6th Reunion of Work Groups for the Implementation of European Convention of Landscape – The Landscape and Rural Patrimony (Sibiu, 2007). The guide focuses on the promotion of sustainable landscaping of national and community rural areas, with an interest in the development, protection and valorization of rural heritage. In essence, the sustainable valorization of the rural heritage can be performed on four levels: touristic, economic, didactic and socio-economic (Grigorovschi et alii, 2007).

For the sustainable valorisation of patrimony of the North-East Development Region rural area, we conduct a set of proposals and recommendations:

1. stimulation of the advantages of rural areas through national and regional agritouristic policies by means of: financial mechanisms, incentives for price reduction, retaining traditional clients;

2. recognition and support of the educational component of the rural area by means of: insurance and facilitation of discovering the cultural and spiritual traditions, of historical, architectural or landscaping values of the rural space;
3. a more active involvement of tourists in agricultural activities, alongside the normal touristic activities, namely the promotion of several forms of tourism and valorization of traditional food products;
4. organisation of holidays or educational programs of the type "Another Kind of Schooling" in the touristic areas in the rural environment, following the example of numerous European countries : Austria, Sweden, Switzerland, Slovenia (The Strategic National Framework for Sustainable Development of the Agroalimentary Sector and Rural Area during the period 2014-2020-2030);
5. development of complex brands in: tourism, agritourism, ecologic products, Romanian traditional products;
6. conservation and transmission of rural tradition and the encouragement of new practices and social trends;
7. reactivation and multiplication of the leisurely function of the rural environment and the creation of a patrimony network based on gastronomy, ecologic agriculture and cultural events;
8. approaches for the introduction of cultural heritage elements in the list of the Cultural Universal Heritage;
9. remaking of certain holidays and customs and their introduction in the traditional calendar of local rural events;
10. organisation of courses and training seminars in the field of touristic services;
11. elaboration of a monitoring guide for the rural touristic heritage from a quantitative and qualitative aspect;
12. a more increased implication of local authorities and revitalisation of the knowledge of regional rural values.

As a conclusion, we believe that the valorization of rural patrimony in a sustainable manner is associated with a process of dynamic and balanced development and enables reshaping local identity. Briefly, the rural patrimony seen from a subjective perspective ensures the connection between past and future and at the same time, it is a visible component of the present, being perceived as the main source of understanding the socio-economic environment as well as a source of welfare proliferation (Bessiere, 1998). Given that the rural patrimony under the pressure of society's evolution and socio-economic changes is the main development factor in a permanent, positive or negative change, we consider that its sustainable valorization represents the duty of the present world. (Selfslagh, B., 2002).

The multiple effects of the valorisation of rural touristic heritage in the analysed region, resulted from the local initiative and international cooperation actions may be favourable as well as unfavourable. Among the favourable and desirable effects we can mention: initiation and development of production and purchase activities specific strictly to the rural area; creation of new jobs and therefore reduction of unemployment rate and increase in the inhabitants' incomes, reduction of negative effects of migration and ageing of rural population, facilities for the increase in life standards. Among the unfavourable effects we may count: degradation of landscape and pollution of environment factors, changes of consumption behaviours, manifestation of urbanization trends etc.

The best models and examples to follow in this direction come from the partners in Slovenia, Austria and Poland that agreed on the protection and valorization of rural heritage and registered remarkable progress, internationally recognized within the rural tourism area. The international instrumental framework that the region under analysis could use in order to reach the objectives of a rural regional development while meeting sustainability conditions is linked to: the international organizations created and open to collaboration, the Cork Declaration, 2000 Agenda, Leader+ Programme, Granada Convention (1985).

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